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Levy or Labor? Tehama County impact fee debate renewed

By ANDREA WAGNER -DN Staff Writer

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Discussion about Development Impact Fees was resurrected at the Board of Supervisors meeting Tuesday, as contentious comments filtered into an informational presentation.

This month marks the end of a six-month program hiatus that began in October. The discussion was put on hold until the county could fill the Planning Director vacancy left by the former director's retirement.

During the pause, Corning Planning Director John Stoufer has contracted with the county to be a part-time planning director.

Now, the program that could work toward fee implementation and further study is back on the table.

During Tuesday's meeting, Chief Administrator Bill Goodwin represented the Facilities Planning Committee, a nine-member committee made up of county department heads that was formed to identify future facility needs.

"Progress on this has kind of ebbed and flowed," Goodwin said.

The committee's report to the board identified a timetable for potential fee adoption.

The schedule sets tentative public information meetings for the week of July 11. The earliest date for the supervisors to adopt development impact fees would be Oct. 4.

Representatives from the Local Government Services Committee of the Red Bluff-Tehama Chamber of Commerce included Chairman Bill Moule, Brian Ramsey and Charlie Wright.

The committee's findings differed from those

presented in a general plan fee study prepared by Pacific Mutual Consultants in mid-2010, Moule said.

In a letter submitted to the board April 21, Moule's committee recommends a flat fee of 15 cents per square foot for retail, office or industrial projects, which would be collected in an "as-needed" fund for future improvements.

"Additionally, as a policy consideration, the board should recognize the value of job creation that Retail/Commercial/Industrial building brings to Tehama County and do everything in its power to assist in the Retail/Commercial/Industrial creation," the letter concludes.

Ramsey proposed an alternative.

"Development Impact Fees are a complex and far-reaching subject," Ramsey said.

Proposing a forward thinking initiative, Ramsey suggested a flexible fee that reflects social components and growth trends.

Using population data would keep the fee from a static flat rate, and that would encourage development and draw people to the county, he said.

Wright, who alluded to his longtime family partnership in industrial construction, referred to a disconnect between the standards being set and the expectations of the people that pay the bills.

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"It's all about jobs now," he said.

Tehama County has to compete for business and provide good jobs, he said. The proposal of 15 cents per square foot is not a disincentive.

Last to speak during the informational presentation was Larry Lalaguna of Round-Up Realty.

"I remember the days when Tehama County was prosperous," he said.

The county is wasting its time trying to adopt the fees, and all the meetings and reviews are useless, Lalaguna said.

Increasing fees doesn't increase government revenue, he said.

"I recommend tabling any more adoption of fees until the economy gets better," Lalaguna said.

Since the presentation was merely informational, the board took no action on the matter.

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